

# The Bridge

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# 2015

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## Commissioner Hespe Looks Forward to Statewide Progress in 2015

During my confirmation hearing in December, I emphasized that all of my career experiences from kindergarten through college have reinforced the view that the state must work collaboratively with local districts on behalf of our students, and I stated my intention to continue to proceed with that goal in the forefront. I look forward to serving as a partner with our educators, parents, and students as 2015 unfolds.

The many changes in our world in the 21st Century have necessitated a new vision for educating our youth from kindergarten to college in order to enable them to find rewarding career paths. To do this, our students must have the requisite skills and the creativity to find a niche in an increasingly global economy.

We have two huge challenges. First is to narrow the achievement gap, and second to raise the bar for all students. The basic mission of American public education has always been to prepare our youth for the future which includes recognition of our American values and gaining the knowledge and skills that serve them in the workplace and the community. That mission has not changed with education in 2015. However, the ways we must deliver education to stay consistent with that mission have had to change because we have new challenges that require us to adjust course.

In 2012, when I was the chairperson of the College- and Career-Readiness Task Force, those who served were well aware that there had to be changes to our delivery system if we were to educate our youth for the world they will enter upon graduation. We have not deviated from the basic recommendations of the 2012 final report – adopt high standards, align assessments to adequately measure the standards, and prepare and evaluate educators on delivering high standards. Our major initiatives are all part of one vision – to keep the focus on ensuring that students are on track for success when they go on to college and career.

I am sure that 2015 will yield many positive results from the collaboration between school districts and the state, as we work on behalf of every one of our students.



*Newly confirmed Commissioner David Hespe (center) shares lunch with New Jersey State Board of Education members and the district educators who were honored at the December 18 special meeting of the State Board.*



## Preparing Our Students to Succeed in the Global World

### The Career Ready Practices

The Career Ready Practices reflect the skills and dispositions that every student should develop and practice throughout their educational experience. They are part of NJ Core Curriculum Content Standard (NJCCCS) 9, 21st Century Life and Careers, which were readopted by the State Board of Education on October 1, 2014. These practices can be taught at all grade levels and reinforced in all career exploration and preparation programs with increasingly higher levels of complexity and expectations as students progress to the upper grades. The Career Ready Practices were developed with input from both business and industry and allow for both teacher and student reflection. Local boards of education are required to implement the Career Ready Practices by September 2015.

### What are the Career Ready Practices?

The 12 overarching statements that comprise the Career Ready Practices are:

- Act as a responsible and contributing citizen and employee.
- Apply appropriate academic and technical skills.
- Attend to personal health and financial well-being.
- Communicate clearly, effectively and with reason.
- Consider the environmental, social and economic impacts of decisions.
- Demonstrate creativity and innovation.
- Employ valid and reliable research strategies.
- Utilize critical thinking to make sense of problems and persevere in solving them.
- Model integrity, ethical leadership and effective management.
- Plan education and career path aligned to personal goals.
- Use technology to enhance productivity.
- Work productively in teams while using cultural global competence.

### Why are the Career Ready Practices important?

Career readiness is defined as possessing skills in three overarching areas: academic skills that are needed to be successful; technical skills, i.e. those needed for a specific job function; and the 21st century soft skills, such as critical thinking, communication, creativity and innovation, and social awareness skills that are necessary for a successful career. Each area is equally important and the Career Ready Practices support the development of these soft skills that are critical to success in our global economy. According to a recent survey

conducted by the New Jersey Business and Industry Association (NJBIA), employers found that new, entry-level employees lack the soft skills necessary to be successful (NJBIA, 2014 Business Outlook Survey, 2013). Verbal and written communication skills, critical thinking skills, and time management were cited as examples. It is critical for New Jersey to develop and maintain a highly skilled and globally competitive workforce to support continued economic growth and prosperity.

### Efforts to Support Implementation

The New Jersey Department of Education has created an educator consortium comprising teachers, counselors and administrators who are charged with developing grade-level and subject-area tools and resources to assist schools with implementing the Career Ready Practices for grades K-12. This consortium will attend a planning session in January 2015 and participate in subsequent virtual work sessions. The project is expected to be completed in June 2015. For additional information on the Career Ready Practices, please go to the Department's website at [www.state.nj.us/education/cccs/2014/career/](http://www.state.nj.us/education/cccs/2014/career/).

## Welcome to a New Year of Teaching and Learning

The NJDOE's Division of Academics wishes you and your students all the best as we move into 2015 and continue classroom experiences rich in Common Core standards and skills. We are also getting ready for the PARCC assessments in the spring and know you are guiding students in their preparation. The PARCC website highlights the work of one of New Jersey's own districts – Madison Public Schools. There is much to share in the way of best practices as we move into this phase, so please let us know what you are doing in your classrooms, as well as what you need as the new year gets under way. The Department encourages you to provide new opportunities for inspiring students to stay curious about the world.

Read the PARCC article about the Madison School District at <http://parconline.org/nj-school-plans-spring-administration>

# Federal Grant to Expand High-Quality Preschool Programs to 19 Additional Districts

New Jersey was one of 18 states in 2014 selected to receive a federal Preschool Development Grant of up to \$17.5 million a year to be renewed annually for up to four years. The grants are awarded jointly by the U.S. Department of Education and the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services. The New Jersey funding will be used to provide high-quality preschool to more than 2,300 children in 19 communities.

With expansion funding through the grant, New Jersey will bring the components of its high-quality state preschool program, which is now operating in 35 school districts, to the 19 additional communities. This funding will help more districts provide high-quality preschool programs by being able to hire certified teachers; implement a developmentally appropriate curriculum; provide coaches to support preschool educators to work with children with disabilities and English language learners; and reduce class size.

In addition, the \$17.5 million Preschool Development Grant will:

- Serve an estimated additional 1,248 eligible children in high-quality preschool programs;
- Improve existing preschool programs that are being delivered to 1,067 children; and
- Allow participating school districts to take part in other initiatives to raise program quality for preschool through third grade (e.g., participate in Grow NJ Kids, the state's quality rating improvement system that will provide communities with ratings of preschool programs, as well as staff training to support kindergarten to third-grade instruction).

New Jersey's existing high-quality preschool program currently operates in some of the highest-need communities in the state, including school districts that had been designated as Abbott districts. The funding will provide a mixed-delivery preschool system of school-based, private-provider and Head Start programs, enhancing the learning and development of four-year-old children from families at or below 200 percent of the federal poverty line.

The grant funding will allow New Jersey to expand preschool programs to the following 19 districts:

County	School District
Atlantic	Absecon, Atlantic City, Egg Harbor City Galloway Township, Hamilton
Burlington	Mount Holly Township
Camden	Bellmawr, Lindenwold
Cape May	Middle Township
Cumberland	Upper Deerfield Township
Gloucester	Clayton, Paulsboro
Hudson	North Bergen
Monmouth	Freehold Borough
Ocean	Berkeley Township, Lakewood Township
Passaic	Clifton City
Somerset	Bound Brook
Union	Linden City

## Annual Violence & Vandalism in Schools Report Shows Positive Trends in Districts

In December, the New Jersey Department of Education released the Violence, Vandalism and Substance Abuse in the Schools Report for 2013-2014. By law, the report is produced each year for the state Legislature to review trends in self-reported incidents from districts that include violence, vandalism, weapons offenses, substance offenses, and harassment, intimidation and bullying.

According to Commissioner David Hespe, "Our goal is to ensure that our children have a safe and supportive learning environment, and I'm pleased to see a decline in the number of incidents reported by school districts."

The Violence and Vandalism Report shows the changes in self-reported incidents from year to year but does not analyze the reasons for the changes. Changes from one year to the next may reflect more accurate reporting from districts or may reflect the results of local school policies and programs to address violence, vandalism, substance abuse and bullying.

In addition to the release of the Violence and Vandalism Report, the Department also announced the second year of anti-bullying grade reports, which schools are required by law to post on their websites, and the availability of the 2014 New Jersey School Climate Survey, a free tool that local school officials can download and administer to measure how students, parents and staff feel about the school environment. (For more information on the School Climate Survey, see separate story.)

"The data provided from the Violence, Vandalism and Substance Abuse Report, the self-assessment, and the School Climate Survey can be integral to monitoring and improving the culture and climate in our schools to promote conditions that support teaching and learning," Commissioner Hespe said.

The [Violence and Vandalism Report web page \(www.state.nj.us/education/schools/vandv/index.html\)](http://www.state.nj.us/education/schools/vandv/index.html) contains summaries of district-level and school-level data.



# AchieveNJ UPDATE

## Median Student Growth Percentile (mSGP) Scores Released to Districts January 8

Since 2010, the New Jersey Department of Education has been developing Student Growth Percentiles (SGPs) to demonstrate the relative growth of students over the course of an academic year. Such data offers one important window into teaching and learning in New Jersey. When combined with the other multiple measures of educator practice and student learning, median SGP (mSGP) scores help provide a more comprehensive performance evaluation.

After four years of preparation and piloting, the mSGP scores have been released for qualifying teachers, principals and assistant/vice principals from 2013–14 to be used to finalize those educator's evaluation ratings. Approximately 15% of New Jersey teachers and 60% of New Jersey principals and assistant/vice principals qualify to receive these scores. The [January 8 broadcast memo](#) ([www.nj.gov/education/AchieveNJ/resources/1314mSGPRelease.pdf](http://www.nj.gov/education/AchieveNJ/resources/1314mSGPRelease.pdf)) outlines instructions for accessing the scores and offers guidance for sharing and discussing them among educators in the coming weeks. The Department hopes you will take time to carefully read the memo and the resources developed by the NJDOE to explain this important component of evaluation, including the following:

- A [conversion chart](#) ([www.nj.gov/education/AchieveNJ/resources/mSGPConversionChart.pdf](http://www.nj.gov/education/AchieveNJ/resources/mSGPConversionChart.pdf)) to describe how mSGP scores translate to an educator's evaluation rating;
- The [2013–14 Teacher mSGP Report User Guide](#) ([www.nj.gov/education/AchieveNJ/teacher/percentile/mSGPUserguide.pdf](http://www.nj.gov/education/AchieveNJ/teacher/percentile/mSGPUserguide.pdf)) which provides a detailed explanation of each element of the mSGP score report for all qualifying teachers; and
- The [2013–14 Principal mSGP Report User Guide](#) ([www.nj.gov/education/AchieveNJ/teacher/percentile/principalmSGPUserguide.pdf](http://www.nj.gov/education/AchieveNJ/teacher/percentile/principalmSGPUserguide.pdf)) which provides a detailed explanation of each element of the mSGP score report for all qualifying leaders.

Thank you for your continued commitment to improving the evaluation process. Please share any questions, suggestions, or comments with the Office of Evaluation at (609) 777-3788 or [educatorevaluation@doe.state.nj.us](mailto:educatorevaluation@doe.state.nj.us).

## 2013–14 SGO and Administrator Goal Review Process

The Department is offering a score review process for 2013–14 summative ratings impacted by Student Growth Objective (SGO) and/or Administrator Goal ratings. If a teacher's SGO score or a principal/assistant principal(AP)/vice principal(VP)'s Administrator Goal score

was the sole cause for an Ineffective or Partially Effective summative rating for the 2013–2014 academic year, the educator will be eligible to ask for an expedited review of the rating. In addition, if a teacher's rating is adjusted through the SGO review, that teacher's SGO score may be negated from the principal's SGO average if doing so improves the principal's rating from Ineffective or Partially Effective to Effective or Highly Effective. The steps for this process are as follows:

- The Department has released simple forms for educators to complete that will automatically indicate the adjusted annual summative rating. Principals should share these online forms with teachers who wish to participate in this review:
  - o [Non SGP Teacher SGO Review Form](#) ([www.nj.gov/education/AchieveNJ/implementation/Non-SGPTeacherSGOReviewForm.xlsx](http://www.nj.gov/education/AchieveNJ/implementation/Non-SGPTeacherSGOReviewForm.xlsx))
  - o [SGP Teacher SGO Review Form](#) ([www.nj.gov/education/AchieveNJ/implementation/201314mSGPTeacherSGOReviewForm.xlsx](http://www.nj.gov/education/AchieveNJ/implementation/201314mSGPTeacherSGOReviewForm.xlsx))
  - o [Non-SGP Admin. Goal Review Form](#) ([www.nj.gov/education/AchieveNJ/implementation/Non-SGPAdminGoalReviewForm.xlsx](http://www.nj.gov/education/AchieveNJ/implementation/Non-SGPAdminGoalReviewForm.xlsx))
  - o [Multi-Grade SGP Admin. Goal Review Form](#) ([www.nj.gov/education/AchieveNJ/implementation/201314MultiGradeSGPAdminGoalReviewForm.xlsx](http://www.nj.gov/education/AchieveNJ/implementation/201314MultiGradeSGPAdminGoalReviewForm.xlsx))
  - o [Single Grade SGP Admin. Goal Review Form](#) ([www.nj.gov/education/AchieveNJ/implementation/201314SingleGradeSGPAdminGoalReviewForm.xlsx](http://www.nj.gov/education/AchieveNJ/implementation/201314SingleGradeSGPAdminGoalReviewForm.xlsx))
- Qualifying teachers and principals should complete the forms and submit them to the principal (for teachers) or the chief school administrator (for principals) by February 1, 2015 or within 15 school days of receiving the summative rating, whichever is later.
- The principal or chief school administrator (CSA) must provide an answer to the teacher or principal within 15 school days of receiving an appeal. In instances where the principal reviews a teacher's form, the principal should then forward the information to the CSA.
- Once the CSA signs off on the review, the score weight will be adjusted from 15% to 1% (according to regulations, the weight cannot be zero) and the teacher practice or principal practice instrument score weight will be increased accordingly.
- The educator has 15 school days following the receipt of the CSA's decision to appeal any disagreement they may have to the Commissioner of Education.

# News, Upcoming Events & Professional Development Opportunities



Don't forget to check out the Department's calendar of events (<http://education.state.nj.us/events/>) to view upcoming events that may be of interest to you or your district.

## Surveys Can Provide Valuable Information for Educators and Administrators

### Revised New Jersey School Climate Survey Now Available to Districts

The New Jersey School Climate Survey (NJSCS) was re-released by the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) on December 16, 2014. The Department, in collaboration with the Bloustein Center for Survey Research at Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, has revised the New Jersey School Climate Survey as a result of a validity/reliability study conducted by Bloustein. The study resulted in improvements to the 2014 NJSCS (v.2), including enhanced domains.

Many districts have been using the original NJSCS (2012) to assist in reinforcing positive conditions and addressing obstacles to learning. The latest version offers new features to fit each school's needs, including paper and online survey options, as well as a more convenient data paste tool. Schools are encouraged to use the NJSCS tools as an integral part of continuous efforts to improve school climate. For additional information and survey materials, please go to [www.state.nj.us/education/students/safety/behavior/njscs/](http://www.state.nj.us/education/students/safety/behavior/njscs/).

### The NJ Student Health Survey will be Administered in 2015 to a Random Sample

Your school may be randomly selected to participate in the 2015 New Jersey Student Health Survey (NJSHS) conducted by the New Jersey Department of Education with funding support from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the Departments of Human Services, Health, Children and Families and Law and Public Safety. The survey is administered by Rutgers University, Bloustein Center for Survey Research. The NJSHS follows the standards of the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) developed and administered nationally by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Your support is important for the success of this biennial student survey, which enables state agencies to:

- Plan effective health programs specifically for New Jersey's youth population;
- Provide high school students, teachers, and parents with factual information; and
- Foster pro-social youth behaviors.

The NJSHS is one of the state's primary sources of information about such issues as diet, physical activity, obesity, sexual behavior, and safety behaviors among youth. Information about alcohol, tobacco, other drug use, depression and violence including bullying is also collected through this survey. For additional information, please go to [www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/yrbs/index.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/yrbs/index.htm).

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